

Original statement
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STATEMENT BY BRIGADIER GENERAL STROM THURMOND, PRESIDENT

RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

on H. R. 2607

"A Bill to Create Career Incentive In The Uniform Services."

As President of the Reserve Officers Association, I would like to point out that this Association is organized for one purpose, and that is to support a policy which will provide adequate national security for this country. We believe it is in the interest of national security to attract the highest type of personnel to make a career in the service. We think the enactment of this legislation will help accomplish this purpose.

The Reserve Officers Association is happy to have the opportunity to support as strongly as possible the enactment of legislation to increase the pay of uniform military personnel.

The alarming rate at which both officers and men are leaving the services and the difficulty with which new personnel are recruited presents a most serious threat to our national security. This, in substantial part, is a reflection of the low morale of many members of the military service.

No military service is stronger than the morale and enthusiasm of its personnel. One important influence on morale is the question of military pay. While there are many who for patriotic reasons are most anxious to serve in the military forces, the sheer economics of the world in which we live today requires each to consider the financial support he can afford to his family or dependents. It would, perhaps, be well if through some magic military personnel did not require payment for their services. Unfortunately, the facts are that their families and their interests require the same financial support as their contemporaries in civilian life. In some cases due to the complexities of military life their living costs are much higher.

In October 1949 Congress enacted the Career Compensation Act. While this was an improvement in the pay situation which existed at that time, no one argued that the pay schedule established by that Act was completely inadequate. In May 1952, Congress again enacted legislation which gave a 4% increase in pay to military personnel along with certain increases in the rental and subsistence allowance.

During this same period of six years industry has granted its workers various increases in pay and the civilian employees of the government have received substantial salary increases. It is probable that in no case has salary kept up with the spiraling costs of living, but members of the military service are far behind their contemporaries in civil life. It is unreasonable to assume that military men will remain in the service unless their income bears more relationship to the cost of living. Accordingly, this bill has been called "a bill to promote career incentive in the services".

Furthermore, the cost to the government resulting from the high military turnover is prohibitive - not only in dollars and cents but, more importantly in readiness of our military structure.

In the opinion of the Reserve Officers Association the enactment of such legislation is a must.

The Association recognizes that the approach to these pay increases is unique and in that it provides increases in relation to the amount of service and the attained rank of an individual. It is probable that there will be those who offer other plans such as a flat salary increase for all hands.

It is not the intention of the Association to enter into arguments as to how the pay is increased. It believes that a pay increase is vital, long overdue, and must be enacted. Accordingly, it is fully supporting this bill as introduced, but if, in the wisdom of the Congress, some other plan to increase pay is deemed more appropriate then it will support that proposition with equal force.

We were pleased that the House saw fit to provide an increase of retired pay for military personnel who were retired for physical disability prior to the enactment of the Career Compensation Act.

A substantial percentage of those retired for physical disability in the category mentioned above were retired as a result of wounds received in action.

It is our belief that officers retired for physical disability prior to 1 October 1949 should be entitled to the same increase of percentage of retired pay as officers retired for physical disability after 1 October 1949.

We are grateful that the House of Representatives saw fit to provide an increase in pay for officers retired for physical disability prior to 1 October, 1949, but think that the increase should be more liberal than the percentage provided in the House Bill.

We thank you for the opportunity to have submitted our position on this important legislation.